

Extensive documentation of the language exists, as it is the indigenous language of the Americas in which the most literature has been published.^[21] Such publications include a Cherokee dictionary and grammar as well as several editions of the New Testament and Psalms of the Bible^[22] and the *Cherokee Phoenix* (ᏍᏏᏉᏯ, *Tsalagi Tsulehisanvhi*), the first newspaper published by Native Americans in the United States and the first published in a Native American language.^{[23][24]}

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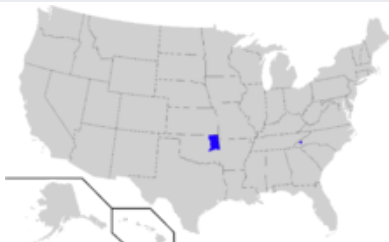
Cherokee	
Ꮜᎅᎂ ᏍᎠᎵᎭᏩᏰᏪ <i>Tsalagi Gawonihisdi</i>	
<div><div>GWY</div><div><i>Tsa-la-gi</i> written in the Cherokee syllabary</div></div>	
Pronunciation	(Oklahoma dialect) [dʒalaˈɡɪ̯ ɡawónihisˈdɪ̯]
Native to	North America
Region	east Oklahoma; Great Smoky Mountains ^[1] and Qualla Boundary in North Carolina ^[2] Also in Arkansas. ^[3] and Cherokee community in California.
Ethnicity	Cherokee
Native speakers	1520 to ~2100 (2018 and 2019) ^{[4][5]}
Language family	<div>Iroquoian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Southern Iroquoian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cherokee</div>
Writing system	Cherokee syllabary, Latin script
Official status	
Official language in	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina Cherokee Nation ^{[6][7][8][9]} of Oklahoma
Regulated by	United Keetoowah Band Department of Language, History, &

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Classification

Cherokee is an Iroquoian language, and the only Southern Iroquoian language spoken today. Linguists believe that the Cherokee people migrated to the southeast from the Great Lakes region about three thousand years ago, bringing with them their language. Despite the three-thousand-year geographic separation, the Cherokee language today still shows some similarities to the languages spoken around the Great Lakes, such as Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca, and Tuscarora.

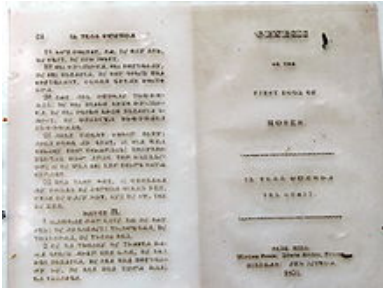
Some researchers (such as Thomas Whyte) have suggested the homeland of the proto-Iroquoian language resides in Appalachia. Whyte contends, based on linguistic and molecular studies, that proto-Iroquoian speakers participated in cultural and economic exchanges along the north-south axis of the Appalachian Mountains. The divergence of Southern Iroquoian (which Cherokee is the only known branch of) from the Northern Iroquoian languages occurred approximately 4,000-3,000 years ago as Late Archaic proto-Iroquoian speaking peoples became more sedentary with the advent of horticulture, advancement of lithic technologies and the emergence of social complexity in the Eastern Woodlands. In the

	Culture (http://www.keetoowahcherokee.org/about-ukb/language/) ^{[7][8]} Council of the Cherokee Nation (http://s://cherokee.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=266941&GUID=C8EC5F0A-E523-49A0-92BD-42041FCE32EA)
Language codes	
ISO 639-2	chr (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/lang_codes_name.php?code_ID=90)
ISO 639-3	chr
Glottolog	cher1273 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/cher1273) ^[10]
Linguasphere	63-AB
	
Pre-contact Distribution of the Cherokee Language	
	
Current geographic distribution of the Cherokee language	

subsequent millennia, the Northern Iroquoian and Southern Iroquoian would be separated by various Algonquin and Siouan speaking peoples as linguistic, religious, social and technological practices from the Algonquin to the north and east and the Siouans to the west from the Ohio Valley would come to be practiced by peoples in the Chesapeake region, as well as parts of the Carolinas.

History

Literacy



Translation of Genesis into the Cherokee language, 1856

Before the development of the Cherokee syllabary in the 1820s, Cherokee was an oral language only. The Cherokee syllabary is a syllabary invented by Sequoyah to write the Cherokee language in the late 1810s and early 1820s. His creation of the syllabary is particularly noteworthy in that he could not previously read any script. Sequoyah had some contact with English literacy and the Roman alphabet through his proximity to Fort Loundon, where he engaged in trade with Europeans. He was exposed to English literacy through his white father. His limited

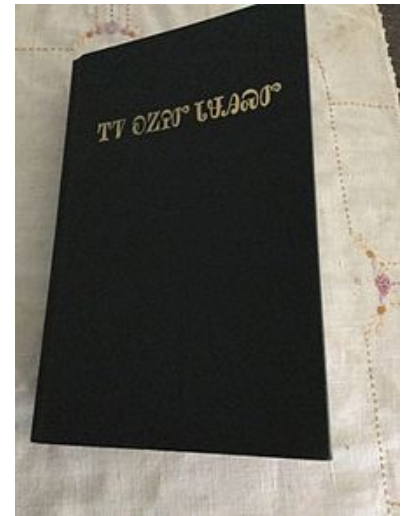
understanding of the Roman alphabet, including the ability to recognize the letters of his name, may have aided him in the creation of the Cherokee syllabary.^[25] When developing the written language, Sequoyah first experimented with logograms, but his system later developed into a syllabary. In his system, each symbol represents a syllable rather than a single phoneme; the 85 (originally 86)^[26] characters in the Cherokee syllabary provide a suitable method to write Cherokee. Some typeface syllables do resemble the Latin, Greek and even the Cyrillic scripts' letters, but the sounds are completely different (for example, the sound /a/ is written with a letter that resembles Latin D).

Around 1809, Sequoyah began work to create a system of writing for the Cherokee language.^[27] At first he sought to create a character for each word in the language. He spent a year on this effort, leaving his fields unplanted, so that his friends and neighbors thought he had lost his mind.^{[28][29]} His wife is said to have burned his initial work, believing it to be witchcraft.^[27] He finally realized that this approach was impractical because it would require too many pictures to be remembered. He then tried making a symbol for every idea, but this also caused too many problems to be practical.^[30]

Sequoyah did not succeed until he gave up trying to represent entire words and developed a written symbol for each syllable in the language. After approximately a month, he had a system of 86 characters.^[28] "In their present form, [typeface syllabary not the original handwritten Syllabary] many of the syllabary characters resemble Roman, Cyrillic or Greek letters or Arabic numerals," says Janine Scancarelli, a scholar of Cherokee writing, "but there is no apparent relationship between their sounds in other languages and in Cherokee."^[27]

Unable to find adults willing to learn the syllabary, he taught it to his daughter, *Ayokeh* (also spelled Ayoka).^[27] Langguth says she was only six years old at the time.^[31] He traveled to the Indian Reserves in the Arkansas Territory where some Cherokee had settled. When he tried to convince the local leaders of the syllabary's usefulness, they doubted him, believing that the symbols were merely *ad hoc* reminders. Sequoyah asked each to say a word, which he wrote down, and then called his daughter in to read the words back. This demonstration convinced the leaders to let him teach the syllabary to a few more people. This took several months, during which it was rumored that he might be using the students for sorcery. After completing the lessons, Sequoyah wrote a dictated letter to each student, and read a dictated response. This test convinced the western Cherokee that he had created a practical writing system.^[29]

When Sequoyah returned east, he brought a sealed envelope containing a written speech from one of the Arkansas Cherokee leaders. By reading this speech, he convinced the eastern Cherokee also to learn the system, after which it spread rapidly.^{[28][29]} In 1825 the Cherokee Nation officially adopted the writing system. From 1828 to 1834, American missionaries assisted the Cherokee in using Sequoyah's original syllabary to develop type face Syllabary characters and print the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the first newspaper of the Cherokee Nation, with text in both Cherokee and English.^[32]



Cherokee Heritage Center - New Hope Church - Bible cover in Cherokee script (2015-05-27 14.09.44 by Wesley Fryer)

In 1826, the Cherokee National Council commissioned George Lowrey and David Brown to translate and print eight copies of the laws of the Cherokee Nation in the new Cherokee language typeface using Sequoyah's system, but not his original self-created handwritten syllable glyphs.^[30]

Once Albert Gallatin saw a copy of Sequoyah's syllabary, he found the syllabary superior to the English alphabet. Even though the Cherokee student learns 86 syllables instead of 26 letters, he can read immediately. The student could accomplish in a few weeks what students of English writing could learn in two years.^[31]

In 1824, the General Council of the Eastern Cherokee awarded Sequoyah a large silver medal in honor of the syllabary. According to Davis, one side of the medal bore his image surrounded by the inscription in English, "Presented to George Gist by the General Council of the Cherokee for his ingenuity in the invention of the Cherokee Alphabet." The reverse side showed two long-stemmed pipes and the same inscription written in Cherokee. Supposedly, Sequoyah wore the medal throughout the rest of his life and it was buried with him.^[30]

By 1825, the Bible and numerous religious hymns and pamphlets, educational materials, legal documents and books were translated into the Cherokee language. Thousands of Cherokee became syllabic and the syllabicity rate for Cherokee in the original Syllabary as well as the typefaced Syllabary, was higher in the Cherokee Nation, than that of literacy of whites in the English alphabet in the United States.

Though use of the Cherokee syllabary declined after many of the Cherokee were forcibly removed to Indian Territory, present day Oklahoma, it has survived in private correspondence, renderings of the Bible, and descriptions of Indian medicine^[33] and now can be found in books and on the internet among other places.

Geographic distribution

The language remains concentrated in some Oklahoma communities^[34] and communities like Big Cove and Snowbird in North Carolina.^[35]

Dialects

At the time of European contact, there were three major dialects of Cherokee: Lower, Middle, and Overhill. The Lower dialect, formerly spoken on the South Carolina-Georgia border, has been extinct since about 1900.^[14] Of the remaining two dialects, the Middle dialect (Kituwah) is spoken by the Eastern band on the Qualla Boundary, and retains ~200 speakers.^[4] The Overhill, or Western, dialect is spoken in eastern Oklahoma and by the Snowbird Community in North Carolina^[36] by ~1,300 people.^[4] The Western dialect is most widely used and is considered the main dialect of the language.^{[6][37]} Both dialects have had English influence, with the Overhill, or Western dialect showing some Spanish influence as well.^[37]

The now extinct Lower dialect spoken by the inhabitants of the Lower Towns in the vicinity of the South Carolina-Georgia border had *r* as the liquid consonant in its inventory, while both the contemporary Kituhwa dialect spoken in North Carolina and the Overhill dialect contain *l*. Only Oklahoma Cherokee developed tone. Both the Lower dialect and the Kituhwa dialect have a "ts" sound in place of the "tl" sound of the Overhill dialect. For instance, the word for 'it is cold (outside)' is O^oBĹ (uj̯ʌ̃t̪[˥]ɑ̃ or [uj̯ʌ̃t̪[˥]á]) in the Overhill dialect, but O^oBC (uj̯ʌ̃t̪sɑ̃) in the Kituhwa dialect.

Language drift

There are two main dialects of Cherokee spoken by modern speakers. The Giduwa (or Kituwah) dialect (Eastern Band) and the Otali dialect (also called the Overhill dialect) spoken in Oklahoma. The Otali dialect has drifted significantly from Sequoyah's syllabary in the past 150 years, and many contracted and borrowed words have been adopted into the language. These noun and verb roots in Cherokee, however, can still be mapped to Sequoyah's syllabary. There are more than 85 syllables in use by modern Cherokee speakers. Modern Cherokee speakers who speak Otali employ 122 distinct syllables in Oklahoma.

Status and preservation efforts



Play media

Video of Jerry Wolfe (1924–2018), speaking in English and the Kituwah dialect of Cherokee in 2013

In 2019, the Tri-Council of Cherokee tribes declared a state of emergency for the language due the threat of it going extinct, calling for the enhancement of revitalization programs.^[5] The language retains about 1,500^[12] to 2,100^[5] Cherokee speakers, but an average of 8 fluent speakers die each month, and only a handful of people under 40 years of age are fluent as of 2019.^[12] In 1986, the literacy rate for first language speakers was 15–20% who could read and 5% who could write, according to the 1986 Cherokee Heritage Center.^[22] A 2005 survey determined that the Eastern band had 460 fluent speakers. Ten years later, the number was believed to be 200.^[38]

Cherokee is "definitely endangered" in Oklahoma and "severely endangered" in North Carolina according to UNESCO.^[13] Cherokee has been the co-official language of the Cherokee Nation alongside English since a 1991 legislation officially proclaimed this under the Act Relating to the Tribal Policy for the Promotion and Preservation of Cherokee Language, History, and Culture.^[39] Cherokee is also recognised as the official language of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians. As Cherokee is official, the entire constitution of the United Keetoowah Band is available in both English and Cherokee. As an official language, any tribal member may communicate with the tribal government in Cherokee or English, English translation services are provided for Cherokee speakers, and both Cherokee and English are used when the tribe provides services, resources, and information to tribal members or when communicating with the tribal council.^[39] The 1991 legislation allows the political branch of the nation to maintain Cherokee as a living language.^[39] Because they are within the Cherokee Nation tribal jurisdiction area, hospitals and health centers such as the Three Rivers Health Center in Muscogee, Oklahoma provide Cherokee language translation services.^[40]

Education

In 2008 The Cherokee Nation instigated a 10-year language preservation plan that involved growing new fluent speakers of the Cherokee language from childhood on up through school immersion programs, as well as a collaborative community effort to continue to use the language at home.^[41] This plan was part of an ambitious goal that in 50 years, 80 percent or more of the Cherokee people will be fluent in the language.^[42] The Cherokee Preservation Foundation has invested \$4.5 million into opening schools, training teachers, and developing curricula for language education, as well as initiating community gatherings where the language can be actively used. They have accomplished: "Curriculum development, teaching materials and teacher training for a total immersion program for children, beginning when they are preschoolers, that enables them to learn Cherokee as their first language. The participating children and their parents learn to speak and read together. The Tribe operates the Kituwah Academy".^[42] Formed in 2006, the Kituwah Preservation & Education Program (KPEP) on the Qualla Boundary focuses on language immersion programs for children from birth to fifth grade, developing cultural resources for the general public and community language programs to foster the Cherokee language among adults.^[43] There is also a Cherokee language immersion school in Tahlequah, Oklahoma that educates students from pre-school through eighth grade.^[44]

Several universities offer Cherokee as a second language, including the University of Oklahoma, Northeastern State University, and Western Carolina University. Western Carolina University (WCU) has partnered with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) to promote and restore the language through the school's Cherokee Studies program, which offers

Drifted Otali Sequoyah Syllabary mapping			
Otali syllable	Sequoyah syllabary index	Sequoyah syllabary chart	Sequoyah syllable
a	00	D	a
e	01	R	e
i	02	T	i
o	03	Ꭰ	o
u	04	Ꭱ	u
v	05	i	v
qwa	06	Ꭲ	ga
ka	07	Ꭳ	ka
ge	08	Ꭴ	ge
gi	09	Ꭵ	gi
go	10	A	go
gu	11	J	gu
gv	12	E	gv
ha	13	Ꭶ	ha
he	14	Ꭷ	he
hi	15	Ꭸ	hi
ho	16	Ꭹ	ho
hu	17	Ꭺ	hu
hv	18	Ꭻ	hv
la	19	W	la
le	20	Ꭽ	le
li	21	Ꭾ	li
lo	22	G	lo
lu	23	M	lu
lv	24	Ꭿ	lv
ma	25	Ꮀ	ma
me	26	Ꮁ	me
mi	27	H	mi
mo	28	Ꮃ	mo
mu	29	Ꮄ	mu
na	30	Ꮅ	na
hna	31	Ꮆ	hna
nah	32	G	nah
ne	33	Ꮇ	ne
ni	34	Ꮈ	ni
no	35	Z	no

classes in and about the language and culture of the Cherokee Indians.^[45] WCU and the EBCI have initiated a ten-year language revitalization plan consisting of: (1) a continuation of the improvement and expansion of the EBCI Atse Kituwah Cherokee Language Immersion School, (2) continued development of Cherokee language learning resources, and (3) building of Western Carolina University programs to offer a more comprehensive language training curriculum.^[45]

Phonology

The family of Iroquoian languages has a unique phonological inventory. Unlike most languages, the Cherokee inventory of consonants lacks the labial sounds *p*, *b*, *f*, and *v*. Cherokee does, however, have one labial consonant *m*, but it is rare, appearing in no more than ten native words.^[46] In fact, the Lower dialect does not produce *m* at all. Instead, it uses *w*.

In the case of *p*, *qw* is often substituted, as in the name of the Cherokee Wikipedia, *Wiḡiqwejdif*. Some words may contain sounds not reflected in the given phonology: for instance, the modern Oklahoma use of the loanword "automobile", with the /ɔ/ and /b/ sounds of English.

Consonants

As with many Iroquoian languages, Cherokee's phonemic inventory is small. The consonants for North Carolina Cherokee are given in the table below. The consonants of all Iroquoian languages pattern so that they may be grouped as (oral) obstruents, sibilants, laryngeals, and resonants (Lounsbury 1978:337).

North Carolina Cherokee consonants						
	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labial-velar	Glottal
Stop		t		k	kʷ	ʔ
Affricate		ʈs				
Lateral affricate		ʈɬ				
Fricative		s				h
Nasal	m	n				
Approximant		l	j	ɰ		

Notes:

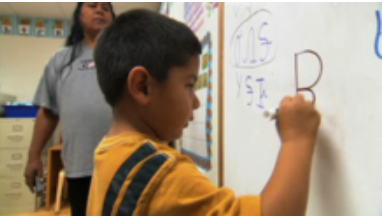
- The stops /t, k, kʷ/ and affricates /ʈs, ʈɬ/ are voiced in the beginning of syllables and between vowels: [d, g, gʷ, d̪z, d̪ʒ]. Before /h/, they surface as aspirated stops: [tʰ, kʰ, kʷʰ, ʈsʰ], except /ʈɬ/ which surfaces as a plain voiceless affricate [ʈɬ] or fricative [ɬ] in some Oklahoma Cherokee speakers.^{[47][48]} These aspirated allophones are felt as separate phonemes by native speakers and are often reflected as such in the orthographies (in romanization or syllabary).
- /ʈs/ is palatalized as [ʈɕ ~ ʈʃ] (voiced allophones: [d̪ɕ ~ d̪ʃ]) in the Oklahoma dialects,^[49] but [ʈs] before /h/ + obstruent after vowel deletion:^[50] *jə-hdlʷvga* > *tsdlʷvga* "you are sick".^[51]
- /ʈɬ/ has merged with /ʈs/ in most North Carolina dialects.^[47]

nu	36	ᵿ	nu
nv	37	ᵿ̃	nv
qua	38	ᵿ̃	qua
que	39	ᵿ̃	que
qui	40	ᵿ̃	qui
quo	41	ᵿ̃	quo
quu	42	ᵿ̃	quu
quv	43	ᵿ̃	quv
sa	44	ᵿ̃	sa
s	45	ᵿ̃	s
se	46	ᵿ̃	se
si	47	ᵿ̃	si
so	48	ᵿ̃	so
su	49	ᵿ̃	su
sv	50	ᵿ̃	sv
da	51	ᵿ̃	da
ta	52	ᵿ̃	ta
de	53	ᵿ̃	de
te	54	ᵿ̃	te
di	55	ᵿ̃	di
ti	56	ᵿ̃	ti
do	57	ᵿ̃	do
du	58	ᵿ̃	du
dv	59	ᵿ̃	dv
dla	60	ᵿ̃	dla
tla	61	ᵿ̃	tla
tle	62	ᵿ̃	tle
tli	63	ᵿ̃	tli
tlo	64	ᵿ̃	tlo
tlu	65	ᵿ̃	tlu
tlv	66	ᵿ̃	tlv
ja	67	ᵿ̃	tsa
je	68	ᵿ̃	tse
ji	69	ᵿ̃	tsi
jo	70	ᵿ̃	tso
ju	71	ᵿ̃	tsu
jv	72	ᵿ̃	tsv
hwa	73	ᵿ̃	wa
we	74	ᵿ̃	we

- [g] (the voiced allophone of /k/) can also be lenified to [ɣ], and [gʷ] (the voiced allophone of /kʷ/) to [ɣʷ ~ w].^{[52][53]}
- The sonorants /n, l, j, w/ are devoiced when preceding or following /h/, with varying degrees of allophony: [ŋ, ɭ ~ ɮ, j ~ ɟ, w ~ ʍ ~ ɸ].^[54]
- /m/ is the only true labial. It occurs only in a dozen of native words^[55] and is not reconstructed for Proto-Iroquoian.^[56]
- /s/ is realized as [ʃ] or even [ʂ] in North Carolina dialects. After a short vowel, /s/ is always preceded by a faint /h/, generally not spelt in the romanized orthographies.^{[54][57][58]}
- /ʔ/ and /h/, including the pre-aspiration /h/ mentioned above, participate in complex rules of laryngeal and tonal alternations, often surfacing as various tones instead. Ex: *h-vhd-a* > *hvhda* "use it!" but *g-vhd-íha* > *gṽdíha* "I am using it" with a lowfall tone;^[59] *wi-hi-gaht-i* > *hwiktí* "you're heading there" but *wi-ji-gaht-i* > *wijigáati* "I am heading there" with a falling tone.^[60] North Carolina Cherokee retains more glottal stops than Oklahoma Cherokee, which shows a low fall tone instead:^{[61][62]} (NC) *su ʔgi*^[63] vs. (Okl) *sṽgi*^[64] "onion".



Tsali Boulevard in Cherokee, North Carolina



Oklahoma Cherokee language immersion school student writing in the Cherokee syllabary.



The Cherokee language taught to preschool students at New Kituwah Academy

from the syllabary rather than from the sounds often behave similarly, /t͡s/ and /kʷ/ being the only two stops not having separate symbols for aspirated stops in any vowel. Ex: ᵀᵂ saquu [saàgʷu], ᵀᵂ quana [kʷʰana].

Vowels

wi	75	ᵀᵂ	wi
wo	76	ᵂᵂ	wo
wu	77	ᵂᵂ	wu
wv	78	ᵂᵂ	wv
ya	79	ᵂᵂ	ya
ye	80	ᵂᵂ	ye
yi	81	ᵂᵂ	yi
yo	82	ᵂᵂ	yo
yu	83	ᵂᵂ	yu
yv	84	ᵂᵂ	yv



A sign in Tahlequah, Oklahoma in English and Cherokee



A lesson at New Kituwah Academy on the Qualla Boundary in North Carolina. The bilingual language immersion school, operated by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, teaches the same curriculum as other American primary schools

0:00 / 0:00

Recording of a native Cherokee speaker from the Eastern Band

0:00 / 0:00

Recording of a Cherokee language stomp dance ceremony in Oklahoma

Orthography

There are two main competing orthographies, depending on how plain and aspirated stops (incl. affricates) are represented:^{[65][66][67]}

- In the "d/t system" orthography, plain stops are represented by voiced stops (*d, g, gw, j, dl*) and aspirated stops by voiceless stops (*t, k, kw, c, tl*). This orthography is favored by native speakers.
- In the "t/th system" orthography, plain stops are represented by voiceless stops instead, and aspirated stops by sequences of voiceless stops + *h* (*th, kh, khw/kwh, ch, thl/tlh*). This orthography is favored by linguists as it is segmentally more accurate.

Another orthography, used in Holmes (1977), doesn't distinguish plain stops from aspirated stops for /t͡s/ and /kʷ/ and uses *ts* and *qu* for both modes.^[68] Spellings working

There are six short vowels and six long vowels in the Cherokee inventory.^[69] As with all Iroquoian languages, this includes a nasalized vowel (Lounsbury 1978:337). In the case of Cherokee, the nasalized vowel is a mid central vowel usually represented as *ɥ* and is pronounced [ẽ̃], that is as a schwa vowel like the unstressed "a" in the English word "comma" plus the nasalization. It is similar to the nasalized vowel in the French word *un* which means "one".

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>Close</u>	i i:		u u:
<u>Mid</u>	e e:	ẽ ẽ:	o o:
<u>Open</u>		a a:	

/u/ is weakly rounded and often realized as [ʷ ~ ʊ].

Word-final vowels are short and nasalized, and receive an automatic high or high-falling tone: *wado* [wad^h] "thank you".^[70] They are often dropped in casual speech: *gaáda* [gaát^h] "dirt".^[71] When deletion happens, trailing /ʔ/ and /h/ are also deleted and any resulting long vowel is further shortened:^[72] *uùgoohv́ʔi* > *uùgoohv́* "he saw it".

Short vowels are devoiced before /h/: *digadóhdi* [digad^hɔhdí].^[70] But due to the phonological rules of vowel deletion, laryngeal metathesis and laryngeal alternation (see below), this environment is relatively rare.

Sequences of two non-identical vowels are disallowed and the vowel clash must be resolved. There are four strategies depending on the phonological and morphological environments:^[73]

1. the first vowel is kept: *uù-aduulíha* > *uùduulíha* "he wants",
2. the second vowel is kept: *hi-ééga* > *hééga* "you're going",
3. an epenthetic consonant is inserted: *jii-uudaléeʔa* > *jiiyuudaléeʔa*,
4. they merge in a different vowel or tone quality.

These make the identification of each individual morphemes often a difficult task:

dúudaanv́neelv́ʔi

dee-ii-uu-adaa(d)-ńvneel-v́ʔi

DIST-ITER-3B-REFL-give:PERF-EXP

"he gave them right back to him"

déenasuúléesgo

dee-iinii-asuúléesg-o

DIST-1A.dual-wash.hands:IMPF-HAB

"you and I always wash our hands"

Tone

Oklahoma Cherokee distinguishes six pitch patterns or tones, using four pitch levels. Two tones are level (low, high) and appear on short or long vowels. The other four are contour tones (rising, falling, lowfall, superhigh) and appear on long vowels only.^[74] Like with consonant and vowel phonemes, minimal pairs contrasting only in tones are hard to come by.^[75]

As for consonants, there is no academic consensus on the notation of tone and length. Below are the main conventions, along with the standardized IPA notation.

Vowel length	Tone	IPA	Pulte & Feeling (1975)	Scancarelli (1986)	Montgomery-Anderson (2008,2015)	Feeling (2003), Uchihara (2016)
Short	Low	ɿ	ā ²	à	a	a
	High	ɿ	ā ³	á	á	á
Long	Low	ɿ	a ²	à:	aa	aa
	High	ɿ	a ³	á:	áa	áá
	Rising	ɿ	a ²³	ǎ:	aá	aá
	Falling	ɿ	a ³²	â:	áà	áà
	Lowfall	ɿ	a ¹ (= a ²¹)	à:	aà	àà, àa
	Superhigh	ɿ	a ⁴ (= a ³⁴)	ǎ:	áá	aǎ

- The **low tone** is the default, unmarked tone.
- The **high tone** is the marked tone. Some sources of high tone apply to the mora, others to the syllable. Complex morphophonological rules govern whether it can spread one mora to the left, to the right or at all. It has both lexical and morphological functions.
- The **rising and falling tones** are secondary tones, i.e. combinations of low and high tones, deriving from moraic high tones and from high tone spread.
- The **lowfall tone** mainly derives from glottal stop deletion after a long vowel, but also has important morphological functions (pronominal lowering, tonic/atonic alternation, laryngeal alternation).
- The **superhigh tone**, also called "highfall" by Montgomery-Anderson, has a distinctive morphosyntactical function, primarily appearing on adjectives, nouns derived from verbs, and on subordinate verbs. It is mobile and fall on the rightmost long vowel. If the final short vowel is dropped and the superhigh tone becomes in word-final position, it is shortened and pronounced like a slightly higher final tone (notated as *ǎ* in most orthographies). There can only be one superhigh tone per word, constraint not shared by the other tones. For these reasons, this contour exhibits some accentual properties and has been referred to as an "accent" (or stress) in the literature.^[76]

North Carolina Cherokee exhibits less tonal features and retains more archaic traits like glottal stops. It is often used to assert hypotheses on tonogenesis in Oklahoma Cherokee.

While the tonal system is undergoing a gradual simplification in many areas, it remains important in meaning and is still held strongly by many, especially older, speakers. The syllabary displays neither tone nor vowel length, but as stated earlier regarding the paucity of minimal pairs, real cases of ambiguity are rare. The same goes for transliterated Cherokee (*osiyo* for [oosíyo], *dohitsu* for [t^hoòhiǵju] etc.), which is rarely written with any tone markers, except in dictionaries. Native speakers can tell the difference between written words based solely on context.

Phonological and morphophonological processes

Vowel deletion

Laryngeal alternation

H-metathesis

Pronominal lowering

Tonicity

Grammar

Cherokee, like many Native American languages, is polysynthetic, meaning that many morphemes may be linked together to form a single word, which may be of great length. Cherokee verbs, the most important word type, must contain as a minimum a pronominal prefix, a verb root, an aspect suffix, and a modal suffix.^[20] For example, the verb form **ge:ga**, "I am going," has each of these elements:

Verb form I-S **ge:ga**

I		S	
g-	e:	-g	-a
PRONOMINAL PREFIX	VERB ROOT "to go"	ASPECT SUFFIX	MODAL SUFFIX

The pronominal prefix is *g-*, which indicates first person singular. The verb root is *-e*, "to go." The aspect suffix that this verb employs for the present-tense stem is *-g-*. The present-tense modal suffix for regular verbs in Cherokee is *-a*.

Cherokee has 17 verb tenses and 10 persons.^[38]

The following is a conjugation in the present tense of the verb to go.^[77] Please note that there is no distinction between dual and plural in the 3rd person.

Full conjugation of Progressive Root Verb-*e*- "going"

Person	Singular	Dual Inc.	Dual Exc.	Plural Inc.	Plural Exc.
1st	I-S gega I'm going	TIS inega You & I are going	ᵂSS osdega We two (not you) are going	TSS idega We're (& you) all going	ᵂVS otsega We're (not you) all going
2nd	PS hega You're going	ᵂSS sdega You two are going		TVS itsega You're all going	
3rd	RS ega She/he/it's going	DIS anega They are going			

The translation uses the present progressive ("at this time I am going"). Cherokee differentiates between progressive ("I am going") and habitual ("I go") more than English does.

Full conjugation of Habitual Root Verb-*e*- "often/usually go"

Person	Singular	Dual Inc.	Dual Exc.	Plural Inc.	Plural Exc.
1st	ƆAT gegoi I often/usually go	TƆAT inegoi You & I often/usually go	ᵂSAT osdegoi We two (not you) often/usually go	TSAT idegoi We (& you) often/usually go	ᵂVAT otsegoi We (not you) often/usually go
2nd	PAT hegoi You often/usually go	ᵂSAT sdegoi You two often/usually go		TVAT itsegoi You often/usually go	
3rd	RAT egoi She/he/it often/usually goes	DƆAT anegoi They often/usually go			

The forms I-AT, PAT, RAT **gegoi**, **hegoi**, **egoi** represent "I often/usually go", "you often/usually go", and "she/he/it often/usually goes", respectively.^[77]

Verbs can also have prepronominal prefixes, reflexive prefixes, and derivative suffixes. Given all possible combinations of affixes, each regular verb can have 21,262 inflected forms.

Cherokee does not make gender distinctions. For example, ᏍᏊᏃᏂ *gawoniha* can mean either "she is speaking" or "he is speaking."^[78]

Pronouns and pronominal prefixes

Like many Native American languages, Cherokee has many pronominal prefixes that can index both subject and object. Pronominal prefixes always appear on verbs and can also appear on adjectives and nouns.^[79] There are two separate words which function as pronouns: *aya* "I, me" and *nihi* "you".

Table of Cherokee first person pronominal prefixes

Number	Set I	Set II
Singular	<i>ji-</i> , <i>g-</i>	<i>agi-</i> , <i>agw-</i>
Dual inclusive	<i>ini-</i> , <i>in-</i>	<i>gini-</i> , <i>gin-</i>
Dual exclusive	<i>osdi-</i> , <i>osd-</i>	<i>ogini-</i> , <i>ogin-</i>
Plural inclusive	<i>idi-</i> , <i>id-</i>	<i>igi-</i> , <i>ig-</i>
Plural exclusive	<i>oji-</i> , <i>oj-</i>	<i>ogi-</i> , <i>og-</i>

Shape classifiers in verbs

Some Cherokee verbs require special classifiers which denote a physical property of the direct object. Only around 20 common verbs require one of these classifiers (such as the equivalents of "pick up", "put down", "remove", "wash", "hide", "eat", "drag", "have", "hold", "put in water", "put in fire", "hang up", "be placed", "pull along"). The classifiers can be grouped into five categories:

- Live
- Flexible (most common)
- Long (narrow, not flexible)
- Indefinite (solid, heavy relative to size), also used as default category^[80]
- Liquid (or container of)

Example:

Conjugation of "Hand him ..."			
Classifier Type	Cherokee	Transliteration	Translation
Live	ᏍᏊᏃᏂ	<i>hikasi</i>	Hand him (something living)
Flexible	ᏍᏊᏃᏂ	<i>hinysi</i>	Hand him (something like clothes, rope)
Long, Indefinite	ᏍᏊᏃᏂ	<i>hidisi</i>	Hand him (something like a broom, pencil)
Indefinite	ᏍᏊᏃᏂ	<i>hivsi</i>	Hand him (something like food, book)
Liquid	ᏍᏊᏃᏂ	<i>hineysi</i>	Hand him (something like water)

There have been reports that the youngest speakers of Cherokee are using only the indefinite forms, suggesting a decline in usage or full acquisition of the system of shape classification.^[81] Cherokee is the only Iroquoian language with this type of classificatory verb system, leading linguists to reanalyze it as a potential remnant of a noun incorporation system in Proto-Iroquoian.^[82] However, given the non-productive nature of noun incorporation in Cherokee, other linguists have suggested that classificatory verbs are the product of historical contact between Cherokee and non-Iroquoian languages, and instead that the noun incorporation system in Northern Iroquoian languages developed later.^[83]

Word order

Simple declarative sentences usually have a subject-object-verb word order.^[84] Negative sentences have a different word order. Adjectives come before nouns, as in English. Demonstratives, such as *ᎠᎵ* *nasgi* ("that") or *ᎠᎵ* *hia* ("this"), come at the beginning of noun phrases. Relative clauses follow noun phrases.^[85] Adverbs precede the verbs that they are modifying. For example, "she's speaking loudly" is *ᎠᎵ ᎠᎵ ᎠᎵ asdaya gawoniha* (literally, "loud she's-speaking").^[85]

A Cherokee sentence may not have a verb as when two noun phrases form a sentence. In such a case, word order is flexible. For example, *Ꭰ ᎠᎵ ᎠᎵ na asgaya agidoda* ("that man is my father"). A noun phrase might be followed by an adjective, such as in *ᎠᎵ ᎠᎵ ᎠᎵ agidoga utana* ("my father is big").^[86]

Orthography

Cherokee is written in an 85-character syllabary invented by Sequoyah (also known as Guest or George Gist). Many of the letters resemble the Latin letters they derive from, but have completely unrelated sound values; Sequoyah had seen English, Hebrew, and Greek writing but did not know how to read them.^[87]

Two other scripts used to write Cherokee are a simple Latin transliteration and a more precise system with diacritical marks.^[88]

Description

Each of the characters represents one syllable, as in the Japanese *kana* and the Bronze Age Greek Linear B writing systems. The first six characters represent isolated vowel syllables. Characters for combined consonant and vowel syllables then follow. It is recited from left to right, top to bottom.^[89]

The charts below show the syllabary as arranged by Samuel Worcester along with his commonly used transliterations. He played a key role in the development of Cherokee printing from 1828 until his death in 1859.



Sequoyah, inventor of the Cherokee syllabary

a	e	i	o	u	v [ə]
D a	R e	T i	Ꭰ o	Ꭱ u	Ꭲ v
Ꭳ ga Ꭴ ka	Ꭶ ge	Ꭷ gi	Ꭸ go	Ꭹ gu	Ꭺ gv
Ꭼ ha	Ꮀ he	Ꮁ hi	Ꮂ ho	Ꮃ hu	Ꮄ hv
Ꮇ la	Ꮊ le	Ꮋ li	Ꮌ lo	Ꮍ lu	Ꮎ lv
Ꮏ ma	Ꮑ me	Ꮒ mi	Ꮓ mo	Ꮔ mu	
Ꮕ na Ꮖ hna Ꮗ nah	Ꮘ ne	Ꮙ ni	Ꮚ no	Ꮛ nu	Ꮜ nv
Ꮝ qua	Ꮞ que	Ꮟ qui	Ꮠ quo	Ꮡ quu	Ꮢ quv
Ꮣ s Ꮤ sa	Ꮥ se	Ꮦ si	Ꮧ so	Ꮨ su	Ꮩ sv
Ꮪ da Ꮫ ta	Ꮬ de Ꮭ te	Ꮮ di Ꮯ ti	Ꮰ do	Ꮱ du	Ꮲ dv
Ꮮ dla Ꮯ tla	Ꮰ tle	Ꮱ tli	Ꮲ tlo	Ꮳ tlu	Ꮴ tlv
Ꮷ tsa	Ꮸ tse	Ꮹ tsi	Ꮺ tso	Ꮻ tsu	Ꮼ tsv
Ꮽ wa	Ꮾ we	Ꮿ wi	Ᏸ wo	Ᏹ wu	Ᏺ wv
Ᏻ ya	Ᏼ ye	Ᏽ yi	᏶ yo	᏷ yu	ᏸ yv

Notes:

1. In the chart, 'v' represents a nasal vowel, /ə/.
2. The character *V do* is shown upside-down in some fonts. It should be oriented in the same way as the Latin letter *V*.^[b]

The transliteration working from the syllabary uses conventional consonants like *qu*, *ts*,..., and may differ from the ones used in the phonological orthographies (first column in the below chart, in the "d/t system").

ø	D a	R e	T i	ᵹ o	ᵹ u	i v
g / k	ᑭ ga ᑭ ka	ᑭ ge	ᑭ gi	A go	J gu	E gv
h	ᑭ ha	ᑭ he	ᑭ hi	ᑭ ho	ᑭ hu	ᑭ hv
l / hl	ᑭ la	ᑭ le	ᑭ li	ᑭ lo	ᑭ lu	ᑭ lv
m	ᑭ ma	ᑭ me	ᑭ mi	ᑭ mo	ᑭ mu	
n / hn	ᑭ na ᑭ hna ᑭ nah	ᑭ ne	ᑭ ni	ᑭ no	ᑭ nu	ᑭ nv
gw / kw	ᑭ qua	ᑭ que	ᑭ qui	ᑭ quo	ᑭ quu	ᑭ quv
s	ᑭ s ᑭ sa	ᑭ se	ᑭ si	ᑭ so	ᑭ su	ᑭ sv
d / t	ᑭ da ᑭ ta	ᑭ de ᑭ te	ᑭ di ᑭ ti	ᑭ do	ᑭ du	ᑭ dv
dl / tl (hl)	ᑭ dla ᑭ tla	ᑭ tle	ᑭ tli	ᑭ tlo	ᑭ tlu	ᑭ tlv
j / c (dz / ts)	ᑭ tsa	ᑭ tse	ᑭ tsi	ᑭ tso	ᑭ tsu	ᑭ tsv
w / hw	ᑭ wa	ᑭ we	ᑭ wi	ᑭ wo	ᑭ wu	ᑭ wv
y / hy	ᑭ ya	ᑭ ye	ᑭ yi	ᑭ yo	ᑭ yu	ᑭ yv

The phonetic values of these characters do not equate directly to those represented by the letters of the Latin script. Some characters represent two distinct phonetic values (actually heard as different syllables), while others often represent different forms of the same syllable.^[89] Not all phonemic distinctions of the spoken language are represented:

- Aspirated consonants are generally not distinguished from their plain counterpart. For example, while /d/ + vowel syllables are mostly differentiated from /t/ + vowel by use of different glyphs, syllables beginning with /gw/ are all conflated with those beginning with /kw/.
- Long vowels are not distinguished from short vowels. However, in more recent technical literature, length of vowels can actually be indicated using a colon, and other disambiguation methods for consonants (somewhat like the Japanese dakuten) have been suggested.
- Tones are not marked.
- Syllables ending in vowels, *h*, or glottal stop are differentiated. For example, the single symbol ᑭ is used to represent both *suú* as in *suúdáli*, meaning "six" (ᑭᑭᑭ), and *súh* as in *súhdi*, meaning "fishhook" (ᑭᑭ).
- There is no regular rule for representing consonant clusters. When consonants other than *s*, *h*, or glottal stop arise in clusters with other consonants, a vowel must be inserted, chosen either arbitrarily or for etymological reasons (reflecting an underlying etymological vowel, see vowel deletion for instance). For example, ᑭᑭᑭᑭ (tsu-na-s-di) represents the word *juunsdǐ*, meaning "small (pl.), babies". The consonant cluster *ns* is broken down by insertion of the vowel *a*, and is spelt as ᑭᑭ /nas/. The vowel is etymological as *juunsdǐ* is composed of the morphemes *di-uunii-asdiǐʔi* (DIST-3B.pl-small), where *a* is part of the root. The vowel is included in the transliteration, but is not pronounced.

As with some other underspecified writing systems (like Arabic), adult speakers can distinguish words by context.

Transliteration issues

Some Cherokee words pose a problem for transliteration software because they contain adjacent pairs of single letter symbols that (without special provisions) would be combined when doing the back conversion from Latin script to Cherokee. Here are a few examples:

- ጥርጦርደሳለኝ = *itsalisanedi* = *i-tsa-li-s-a-ne-di*
- ዐጥሃርጦርደሳለኝ = *uligiyusanvne* = *u-li-gi-yu-s-a-nv-ne*
- ዐከቅጦርደሳለኝ = *uniyesiyi* = *u-ni-ye-s-i-yi*
- ጦርደሳለኝ = *nasiya* = *na-s-i-ya*

For these examples, the back conversion is likely to join *s-a* as *sa* or *s-i* as *si*. Transliterations sometimes insert an apostrophe to prevent this, producing *itsalis'enedi* (cf. Man'yōshū).

Other Cherokee words contain character pairs that entail overlapping transliteration sequences. Examples:

- $G\Theta$ transliterates as *nahna*, yet so does $\Theta\mathfrak{t}$. The former is *nah-na*, the latter is *na-hna*.

If the Latin script is parsed from left to right, longest match first, then without special provisions, the back conversion would be wrong for the latter. There are several similar examples involving these character combinations: *naha nahe nahi naho nahu nahv*.

A further problem encountered in transliterating Cherokee is that there are some pairs of different Cherokee words that transliterate to the same word in the Latin script. Here are some examples:

- DəRZ and D4Z both transliterate to *aseno*
- ƎəiT and ƎRT both transliterate to *gesvi*

Without special provision, a round trip conversion changes DøRZ to D4Z and changes ƆøiT to ƆRT.^[c]

Unicode

Cherokee was added to the Unicode Standard in September, 1999 with the release of version 3.0.

Blocks

The main Unicode block for Cherokee is U+13A0–U+13FF.^[d] It contains the script's upper-case syllables as well as six lower-case syllables.

Cherokee ^{[1][2]}																
Official Unicode Consortium code chart (https://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U13A0.pdf) (PDF)																
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A	B	C	D	E	F
U+13Ax	D	R	T	Ꮓ	Ꮕ	i	Ꮗ	Ꮘ	Ꮚ	Ꮛ	A	J	E	Ꮝ	Ꮟ	Ꮠ
U+13Bx	Ꮢ	Ꮣ	Ꮥ	W	Ꮧ	Ꮩ	Ꮫ	M	Ꮭ	Ꮮ	Ꮰ	H	Ꮪ	Ꮬ	Ꮮ	Ꮯ
U+13Cx	G	Ꮢ	h	Z	Ꮤ	Ꮦ	Ꮨ	Ꮪ	Ꮫ	Ꮭ	Ꮮ	Ꮰ	Ꮱ	Ꮳ	4	Ꮵ
U+13Dx	Ꮶ	Ꮷ	R	Ꮹ	Ꮻ	Ꮽ	Ꮾ	Ꮿ	Ᏸ	V	S	Ᏺ	Ᏻ	Ᏽ	L	C
U+13Ex	᏷	ᏸ	P	G	ᏺ	ᏻ	K	ᏽ	᏾	᏿	᐀	ᐁ	ᐂ	ᐃ	6	ᐅ
U+13Fx	ᐆ	ᐇ	ᐈ	ᐉ	B	ᐋ			ᐍ	ᐎ	ᐏ	ᐐ	B	ᐒ		
Notes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.^ As of Unicode version 13.0 2.^ Grey areas indicate non-assigned code points 																

The rest of the lower-case syllables are encoded at U+AB70–ABBF.

Cherokee Supplement ^[1] Official Unicode Consortium code chart (https://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/UAB70.pdf) (PDF)																
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A	B	C	D	E	F
U+AB7x	D	R	T	Ꮓ	Ꮕ	i	S	Ꮗ	Ꮘ	Y	A	J	E	Ꮚ	Ꮛ	Ꮜ
U+AB8x	Ꮞ	Ꮟ	Ꮠ	W	Ꮤ	Ꮥ	G	M	Ꮧ	Ꮨ	Ꮩ	H	Ꮫ	Ꮬ	Ꮭ	Ꮮ
U+AB9x	G	Ꮰ	Ꮱ	Z	Ꮴ	Ꮵ	Ꮶ	Ꮷ	Ꮸ	Ꮹ	Ꮺ	Ꮻ	Ꮼ	Ꮽ	Ꮾ	Ꮿ
U+ABAx	Ᏸ	Ᏹ	R	Ᏻ	Ᏼ	S	ᏸ	ᏹ	ᏺ	V	S	ᏼ	ᏽ	᏾	L	C
U+ABBx	᏿	᐀	P	G	ᐄ	ᐅ	K	ᐇ	ᐈ	G	ᐊ	ᐋ	ᐌ	ᐍ	ᐎ	ᐏ
Notes 1.^ As of Unicode version 13.0																

Fonts and digital platform support

A single Cherokee Unicode font, Plantagenet Cherokee, is supplied with macOS, version 10.3 (Panther) and later. Windows Vista also includes a Cherokee font. Several free Cherokee fonts are available including Digohweli, Donisiladv, and Noto Sans Cherokee. Some pan-Unicode fonts, such as Code2000, Everson Mono, and GNU FreeFont, include Cherokee characters. A commercial font, Phoreus Cherokee, published by TypeCulture, includes multiple weights and styles.^[91] The Cherokee Nation Language Technology Program supports "innovative solutions for the Cherokee language on all digital platforms including smartphones, laptops, desktops, tablets and social networks."^[92]

Vocabulary

Numbers

Cherokee uses Arabic numerals (0–9). The Cherokee council voted not to adopt Sequoyah's numbering system.^[93] Sequoyah created individual symbols for 1–20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, and 100 as well as a symbol for three zeros for numbers in the thousands, and a symbol for six zeros for numbers in the millions. These last two symbols, representing ",000" and ",000,000", are made up of two separate symbols each. They have a symbol in common, which could be used as a zero in itself.



Cherokee stop sign, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, with "alehwisdiha" (also spelled "halehwisda") meaning "stop"

English	Cherokee ^[94]	Transliteration
one	ᄆᄃ	saquu
two	ᄃᄆ	tali
three	ᄃᄆ	tsoi
four	ᄃᄃᄆ	nvgi
five	ᄆᄃᄆ	hisgi
six	ᄆᄃᄆ	sudali
seven	ᄆᄆᄆᄆ	galiquogi
eight	ᄆᄆᄆ	tsunela
nine	ᄆᄆᄆ	sonela
ten	ᄆᄆᄆ	sgohi
eleven	ᄆᄆ	sadu
twelve	ᄆᄆᄆ	talidu
thirteen	ᄆᄆᄆ	tsogadu
fourteen	ᄆᄆᄆ	nigadu
fifteen	ᄆᄆᄆᄆ	hisgadadu
sixteen	ᄆᄆᄆ	daladu
seventeen	ᄆᄆᄆᄆ	galiquadu
eighteen	ᄆᄆᄆᄆ	neladu
nineteen	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	soneladu
twenty	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	talisgohi



Cherokee traffic sign in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, reading "tla adi yigi", meaning "no parking" from "tla" meaning "no"

Days

English	Cherokee ^{[94][95]}	Transliteration
Days of the Week	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	hiltvgiiga
Sunday	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	unadodaquasgv
Monday	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	unadodaquohnvhi
Tuesday	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	talineiga
Wednesday	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	tsoineiga
Thursday	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	nvgineiga
Friday	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	junagilosdi
Saturday	ᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆᄆ	unadodaquidena

Months

English	Meaning	Cherokee	Transliteration
January	Month of the Cold Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	dunolvtani
February	Month of the Bony Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	kagali
March	Month of the Windy Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	anuyi
April	Month of the Flower Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	kawani
May	Month of the Planting Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	anaagvti
June	Month of the Green Corn Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	dehaluyi
July	Month of the Ripe Corn Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	guyequoni
August	Month of the End of Fruit Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	galonii
September	Month of the Nut Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	duliisdi
October	Month of the Harvest Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	duninvdi
November	Month of Trading Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	nudadequa
December	Month of the Snow Moon	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	vsgiga

Colors

English	Cherokee	Transliteration
black	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	gvnagei
blue	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	sagonigei
brown	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	uwodige
green	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	itseiyusdi
gray	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	usgolv sagonige
gold	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	dalonigei
orange	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	asalonige
pink	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	gigageiyusdi
purple	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	gigesdi
red	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	gigage
silver	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	adelv unegv
white	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	unega
yellow	ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ	dalonige

Word creation

The polysynthetic nature of the Cherokee language enables the language to develop new descriptive words in Cherokee to reflect or express new concepts. Some good examples are ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (*ditiyohihi*, "he argues repeatedly and on purpose with a purpose") corresponding to "attorney" and ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (*didaniyisgi*, "the final catcher" or "he catches them finally and conclusively") for "policeman."^[96]

Other words have been adopted from another language such as the English word *gasoline*, which in Cherokee is ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (*gasoline*). Other words were adopted from the languages of tribes who settled in Oklahoma in the early 1900s. One interesting and humorous example is the name of Nowata, Oklahoma deriving from *nowata*, a Delaware word for "welcome" (more precisely the Delaware word is *nuwita* which can mean "welcome" or "friend" in the Delaware

languages). The white settlers of the area used the name *nowata* for the township, and local Cherokee, being unaware that the word had its origins in the Delaware language, called the town ᎃᎦᎵᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ (Amadikanigvnagvna) which means "the water is all gone gone from here" – i.e. "no water."^[97]

Other examples of adopted words are ᎠᎵ (kawi) for "coffee" and ᎠᎵᎠ (watsi) for "watch"; which led to ᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ (utana watsi, "big watch") for *clock*.^[97]

Meaning expansion can be illustrated by the words for "warm" and "cold", which can be also extended to mean "south" and "north". Around the time of the American Civil War, they were further extended to US party labels, Democratic and Republican, respectively.^[98]

Samples

From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Cherokee	Translation	Syllabary
<i>Nigada aniyvwi nigeguda'lvna ale</i>	All human beings are born free and	ᎠᎵᎵᎠ ᎃᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ ᎠᎵᎵᎠᎵᎠ ᎃᎠᎵᎠ
<i>unihloyi unadehna duyukdv gesv'i.</i>	equal in dignity and rights. They are	ᎠᎵᎵᎠ ᎃᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ ᎠᎵᎵᎠᎵᎠ ᎠᎵᎵᎠᎵᎠ
<i>Gejinela</i>		ᎠᎵᎵᎠᎵᎠ
<i>unadanvtehdī ale unohlīdī</i>	endowed with reason and conscience	ᎠᎵᎵᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ ᎃᎠᎵᎠ ᎠᎵᎵᎠᎵᎠ
<i>ale sagwu gesv junilvwisdanedi</i>	and should act towards one another in	ᎃᎠᎵᎠ ᎠᎵᎵᎠ ᎠᎵᎵᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ
<i>anahldinvdlv adanvdo gvhdī.</i>	a spirit of brotherhood.	ᎃᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ ᎃᎠᎵᎠᎵᎠ ᎠᎵᎵᎠᎵᎠ

Notes

- Ethnologue classifies Cherokee as moribund (8a), which means that "The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older".^[11]
- There was a difference between the old-form DO (Λ-like) and a new-form DO (V-like). The standard Digohweli font displays the new-form. Old Do Digohweli and Code2000 fonts both display the old-form^[90]
- This has been confirmed using the online transliteration service.
- The PDF Unicode chart shows the new-form of the letter *do*.

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External links

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- Cherokee wordlist lookup (<https://language.cherokee.org/word-list/>)
- Cherokee Nation Dikaneisdi (Word List) (<https://language.cherokee.org/language-programs/cherokee-language-consortium/>)
- Cherokee numerals (<http://www.languagesandnumbers.com/how-to-count-in-cherokee/en/chr/>)
- Cherokee – Sequoyah transliteration system ([http://www.translitteration.com/translitteration/en/cherokee/sequoyah/](http://www.translitteration.com/transliteration/en/cherokee/sequoyah/)) – online conversion tool
- Unicode Chart (<https://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U13A0.pdf>)
- Cherokee Nation ᏍᎪᎦ ᏧᎾᏩᏱᏰᎠ ᏧᎾᏩᏱᏰᎠ ᏧᎾᏩᏱᏰᎠ (Tsalagi Gawonihisdi teginalotsi unadotlvnvi / Cherokee Language Technology ([https://web.archive.org/web/20150930042006/http://www.cherokee.org/language-tech/en-us/%E1%8E%A3%E1%8F%AA%E1%8F%85%E1%8F%92\(home\).aspx](https://web.archive.org/web/20150930042006/http://www.cherokee.org/language-tech/en-us/%E1%8E%A3%E1%8F%AA%E1%8F%85%E1%8F%92(home).aspx))

Language archives, texts, audio, video

- Cherokee Phoenix (<http://www.cherokeephoenix.org/?sectionId=458>), bilingual newspaper in Cherokee and English
- Cherokee Traditions digital archive (<https://web.archive.org/web/20140921023619/http://www.wcu.edu/library/digitalcollections/cherokeetraditions/LanguageAndLiterature/>), from Western Carolina University
- Cherokee New Testament Online (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190825010742/https://www.cherokeewtestament.com/>) Online translation of the New Testament. Currently the largest Cherokee document on the internet.
- "Native American Audio Collections: Cherokee" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20130302034703/https://www.amphilsoc.org/exhibit/natamaudio/cherokee>). *American Philosophical Society*. Archived from the original (<http://www.amphilsoc.org/exhibit/natamaudio/cherokee>) on 2013-03-02. Retrieved 2013-05-20.
- Cherokee Language Texts (<http://cdm.bostonathenaeum.org/cdm/search/collection/p16057coll24/searchterm/cherokee/field/langua/mode/all/conn/and/order/nosort>), from the Boston Athenæum: Schoolcraft Collection of Books in Native American Languages. Digital Collection. (<http://cdm.bostonathenaeum.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16057coll24>)

Language lessons and online instruction

- [Free online Cherokee classes \(https://learn.cherokee.org/\)](https://learn.cherokee.org/) from the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma
- [Cherokee Language Online \(http://www.culturev.com/cherokee/cherokee.html\)](http://www.culturev.com/cherokee/cherokee.html) (Beginning dialogues, audio, flashcards and grammar from culturev.com)
- [Cherokee Language downloadable flashcard decks \(https://ankiweb.net/shared/decks/cherokee\)](https://ankiweb.net/shared/decks/cherokee) (Some based on culturev.com)

- [Mango Languages \(https://mangolanguages.com/available-languages/learn-cherokee/\)](https://mangolanguages.com/available-languages/learn-cherokee/) has free lessons via their website or app
- [Online Cherokee language classes \(https://web.archive.org/web/20140826120646/http://cherokeelanguage.wcu.edu/classes/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20140826120646/http://cherokeelanguage.wcu.edu/classes/), from [Western Carolina University](#)
- [Cherokee Language Program at Western Carolina University on Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/WCUCherokeeLanguage?_fb_noscript=1\)](https://www.facebook.com/WCUCherokeeLanguage?_fb_noscript=1), additional materials
- [CherokeeLessons.com \(https://web.archive.org/web/20110708142042/http://www.cherokeelessons.com/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20110708142042/http://www.cherokeelessons.com/) (Hosts Creative Commons licensed materials including a textbook covering grammar and many hours of challenge/response based audio lesson files).
- [Cherokee language YouTube videos for beginners, by tsasuyeda \(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuqKGb4re9a5TssltxrTw6Q\)](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuqKGb4re9a5TssltxrTw6Q)
- [Cherokee speakers \(https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZEkBhbUA_CWtVSnXEf64ny7pUwIJFfgI\)](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZEkBhbUA_CWtVSnXEf64ny7pUwIJFfgI), Cherokee Nation

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